

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5681
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 1075

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - FOR TEXT

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PGOV, PINT
SUBJECT: ALL QUIET ON THE BALUCHISTAN FRONT

REF: -) ISLAMABAD 0664 B) ISLAMABAD 0335

SUMMARY--THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION IN BALUCHISTAN
HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY SINCE BHUTTO'S REMOVAL FROM POWER.
GENERAL ZIA HAS TAKEN SEVERAL STEPS, INCLUDING DISBANDING
THE HYDERABAD TRIBUNAL, REMOVING SOME ARMY TROOPS AND
ANNOUNCING A GENERAL AMNESTY, TO RECONCILE THE BALUCHIS
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WITH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. BALUCHISTAN'S TRIBAL LEADERS
HAVE RESPONDED WITH PRIASE FOR THE CHIEF MARTIAL LAW
ADMINISTRATOR.
PROBLEMS REMAIN, HOWEVER. SMALL-SCALE NON-POLITICAL
BANDITRY CONTINUES. THE TRADITIONAL CONFLICTS OVER
DIVISION OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN PROVINCES AND THE CENTER,
AND THE INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN AN ACTIVE CENTRAL

GOVERNMENT AND A TRIBAL HIERARCHY JEALOUS OF ITS AUTHORITY, ARE POTENTIAL DIVISIVE ELEMENTS IN THE FUTURE OF THIS LARGEST AND MOST BACKWARD OF PAKISTAN'S PROVINCES. END SUMMARY.

1. EVENTS IN BALUCHISTAN ARE ONE OF THE FEW BRIGHT LIGHTS ON PAKISTAN'S CURRENT POLITICAL HORIZON. SOON AFTER ASSUMING POWER, CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR (CMLA) GENERAL ZIA UL-HAQ TOLD US THAT HE BELIEVED THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATIONS IN BALUCHISTAN COULD BE CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED. HE ADDED THAT AFFAIRS IN PAKISTAN'S LARGEST BUT MOST SPARSELY SETTLED PROVINCE HAD BEEN A CONTINUAL IRRITANT TO BHUTTO, AND HE PLACED THE BLAME AT THE FORMER PM'S DOORSTEP. "BHUTTO FAILED TO INTEGRATE BALUCHISTAN INTO PAKISTAN BECAUSE, "ZIA NOTED, " HE ATTEMPTED TO IMPOSE A MILITARY SOLUTION TO A POLITICAL PROBLEM."

2. THE CMLA WANTS TO AVOID A REPETITION OF THE BALUCHI INSURGENCY WHICH REACHED A PEAK IN 1974 AND TIED DOWN SEVERAL PAK ARMY DIVISIONS. HIS IMMEDIATE AIM IN THE PROVINCE HAS BEEN TO RECONCILE THE BALUCHI LEADERSHIP AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND TO BUILD A FOUNDATION FOR LONG-TERM COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PROVINCE AND THE CENTER. SINCE JULY, HE HAS TAKEN A NUMBER OF STEPS TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL:

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--- THE HYDERABAD TRIBUNAL WAS DISSOLVED AND THE DEFENDENTS FREED. AMONG THOSE RELEASED WERE SEVERAL PROMINENT BALUCHI LEADERS WHO HAVE RETURNED TO THE POLITICAL ARENA AND WHO PRAISE THE CMLA'S ACTIONS.

--- A GENERAL AMNESTY FOR ALL BALUCHI DISIDENTS, BOTH IN AND OUT OF PAKISTAN, WAS ANNOUNCED AND LATER REAFFIRMED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT A NUMBER OF BALUCHIS HAVE CONSEQUENTLY RETURNED FROM AFGHANISTAN AND THAT SEVERAL GROUPS HAVE COME DOWN OUT OF THE HILLS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS HONORED ITS AMNESTY PLEDGE, AND COURT CASES AGAINST THE RETURNEES ARE BEING DROPPED.

--- ARMY TROOPS, SECONDED FROM FORCES OUTSIDE THE PROVINCE, ARE BEING GRADUALLY WITHDRAWN. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PULL-OUT WILL LEAD TO APPROXIMATELY 40,000 TROOPS PERMANENTLY STATIONED IN THE PROVINCE, APPROXIMATELY THE PRE-INSURGENCY LEVEL.

3. ZIA'S GESTURES OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION, COMBINED WITH THE DRAW-DOWN OF ARMY TROOPS, HAVE BEEN WELL-RECEIVED BY MOST BALUCHI LEADERS. GHAS BUX BIZENJO, A PROMINENT

TRIBAL LEADER AND A FORMER GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE WHEN A NON-PPP COALITION RULED IN 1972, HAS PRAISED THE CMLA FOR THE AMNESTY AND THE "ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS." ANOTHER POWERFUL TRIBAL LEADER, ATTAULLAH MENGAL, WHO RECENTLY HAD A HEART OPERATION IN THE US AT GOP EXPENSE, ALSO REPORTEDLY SUPPORTS THE STEPS TAKEN BY ZIA TO APPEASE THE BALUCHIS.

4. WALI KHAN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE DEFUNCT NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY, HAS A NUMBER OF NATURAL ALLIES AMONG THE TRIBAL CHIEFS WHO WERE LEADERS IN HIS PARTY IN THE EARLY 70'S. HOWEVER, IN HIS QUEST FOR THE NATIONAL POLITICAL GRAIL (SEE REF A), WALI HAS EMPHASIZED NATIONAL RATHER THAN PROVINCIAL ISSUES, AROUSING A MEASURE OF SUSPICION AMONG MANY OF THE BALUCHI LEADERS. CONSEQUENTLY, ONLY A VERY CONFIDENTIAL

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FEW HAVE COICED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE FREED WALI.

5. ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION HAS IMPROVED, THERE REMAIN SOME DISCONCERTING PROBLEMS. BANDITRY CONTINUES; THERE ARE-- AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE -- ATTACKS ON ARMY UNITS BY DISCONTENTED TRIBALS. WE BELIEVE THE ATTACKS ARE NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, BUT RATHER REFLECT THE TRADITIONAL "LOOT AND PILLAGE" WAY OF LIFE DEAR TO THE HEARTS OF MANY OF BALUCHISTAN'S MOST UNRECONSTRUCTED CITIZENS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 1075

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

6. OF GREATER CONCERN TO ISLAMABAD IS THE BELIEF HELD BY MANY POLITICAL OBSERVERS THAT ANY RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE PROVINCE AND THE CENTER IS, BY ITS VERY NATURE, VIABLE ONLY IN THE SHORT-TERM. THEY ALLEGE THAT WHENEVER A NEW GOVERNMENT ASSUMES POWER, BE IT AYUB'S, YAHYA'S, OR BHUTTO'S, ITS FIRST APPROACH TO THE BALUCHIS HAS BEEN CONCILIATORY AND MODERATE. IN THE END, EACH ADMINISTRATION RESORTED TO CONFRONTATION POLITICS.

7. THESE OBSERVERS CONTEND THAT THE LONG-TERM GOALS OF THE BALUCHI LEADERS AND WHOEVER OCCUPIES POWER IN ISLAMABAD ARE INHERENTLY CONTRADICTORY. THE TRIBAL LEADERS HAVE A FUNDAMENTAL INTEREST IN THE RETENTION OF THEIR OWN AUTHORITY SYSTEM, AND THREATS TO THAT SYSTEM - SUCH AS THOSE POSED
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BY A CIGOROUS CENTRAL GOVERNMENT - ARE STRENUOUSLY OPPOSED. THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, SEES AN ACTIVE POLICY OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION, BE IT IN DEVELOPMENT, BUREAUCRATIC, OR OTHER TERMS, AS THE BEST WAY TO ENSURE THE INTEGRATION OF THE PROVINCE INTO THE NATION.

8. THE HISTORICAL DIFFICULTY OF DETERMINING THE DIVISION OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN THE PROVINCES AND THE CENTER, AND THE CONSEQUENT DEGREE OF PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY, PLAGUES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAMABAD AND BALUCHISTAN. ALTHOUGH THE 1973 CONSTITUTION GAVE A PRESCRIPTION, ACCEPTED BY ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES, FOR BALANCING FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL POWERS, INTERPRETING THAT PROVISION HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT EASY OR CONSISTENT. FINALLY, TRIBESMEN IN BOTH BALUCHISTAN AND THE FRONTIER ARE SENSITIVE TO ANY INDICATION THAT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY IS WEAKENING BECAUSE OF INSTABILITY IN THE CENTER. THE BALUCHI LEADERS WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANY FALTERING THEY PERCEIVE IN ISLAMABAD TO SOLIDIFY THEIR OWN CONTROL.

9. ZIA MAY HAVE BOUGHT TIME IN BALUCHISTAN AND THUS MAY HAVE ENSURED THAT THE PROVINCE WILL NOT BE A PROBLEM DURING HIS TENURE. BUT THE FUTURE COURSE OF PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL SYSTEM IS UNCERTAIN AT BEST (REF B). THE MOMENT

LUCHISTAN'S TRIBAL HIERARCHY EITHER OVER-REACHES TO
EXPLOIT WEAKNESS AT THE CENTER OF FEELS ITSELF "CROWDED"
BY A MORE ENERGETIC, IF BENEVOLENT, CENTER,
TRADITIONAL FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FRICTION CAN AGAIN REASSERT
ITSELF. THE FIRES OF DISCONTENT IN THIS MOST BACKWARD --
AND POTENTIALLY RICHEST -- OF PAKISTAN'S PROVINCES ARE
CLEARLY BANKED, NOT OUT, AND THEY COULD FLARE AGAIN.

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10. THIS REPORT HAS BEEN PRODUCED IN CONSULTATION WITH
CONGEN KARACHI. HUMMEL

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